

Qualified Programmatic Planning Concept Summary

For discussion by Planning Task Force 11.22.05

Qualified Programmatic Planning represents an effort to front-load CEQA review at the planning level. Incentives will be provided to local jurisdictions that voluntarily undertake Qualified Programmatic Planning that meets objectives designed to achieve the State's goals to provide housing and infrastructure while preserving environmental resources and important agricultural areas. Projects consistent with the plan can use a short-form EIR.

A local jurisdiction (or a consortium of jurisdictions acting pursuant to a JPA) can prepare a Qualified Programmatic Plan (QPP). A QPP is an existing type of planning document (e.g., a general plan, community plan, specific plan, redevelopment plan, or local coastal plan) that meets certain additional procedural and substantive criteria specified in the governing statute.

In order to qualify as a QPP, the QPP agency must meet certain procedural requirements including consultation with all relevant regional agencies (such as RWQCBs, AQMDs, and COGs), undertaking a robust public process, and preparation of an EIR. As part of the public process, the QPP agency must provide access to all relevant information, including land use, conservation, and related documents, implement an outreach program in order to provide information to the community and gain diverse stakeholder input, publish a notice of the proposed plan in the newspaper, and allow for a 60-day public review period for the draft QPP and the QPP EIR.

The QPP must also meet certain substantive requirements. The QPP agency must make written findings that the QPP takes into account and meets certain objectives (such as the efficient utilization of infill capacity, the protection of priority habitat and agricultural lands, the efficient and orderly development of lands that aims for a jobs-housing balance). The QPP must also take into account regional concerns of housing needs, traffic, land conservation, water supply, air quality, and the like. In addition, the QPP and related EIR must meet certain standards that can be objectively measured, including provision of an appropriate land supply for housing, efficient land use in general, and conservation of farmland and habitat lands.

A QPP would be subject to major amendment (e.g., converting land designated for ex-urban uses to urban use designations) only periodically and upon further repetition of the more robust public and agency participation processes.

Once a local jurisdiction has adopted the QPP, a lead agency may prepare a short-form EIR for any project that is consistent with the QPP's land use designation, standards of population and building density. The short-form EIR will address project-specific environmental impacts. Furthermore, the lead agency must incorporate mitigation measures identified in the QPP's EIR. In return, the project's cumulative and growth-inducing impacts, as well as off-site project alternatives, and possibly some other specified regional impacts, will not need to be analyzed in the short form EIR.